

Alaska River Adventures

Rivers that are part of the National Wild and Scenic River System are known for their free-flowing, clear waters and have limited access to their shorelines. They offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and a variety of recreational experiences.

The Bureau of Land Management has the responsibility to preserve these values on six such rivers in Alaska, now and for the future.



Gulkana National Wild River

Boating terms

Ferry: To move a boat or craft laterally across the current through the use of a backpaddling technique.

High water: When the volume of water in a river increases above the normal flow due to storms or spring runoff, the river's power increases the level of danger to boaters. For example, river difficulty ratings increase and it is more difficult to be rescued in the event of a mishap.

Lining: Some rapids cannot be safely navigated. For lining, 30-foot lines should be attached to the bow and stern. While standing on shore, you can use the lines to safely guide your craft through the rapids.

Portage: Taking the craft out of the water and carrying it to navigable water. This is often done around rapids where lining is not possible or between lakes.

Riffles: A shallow area extending across the bed of a stream, over which the water flows swiftly. The water surface is broken in short, choppy waves.

Strainer: Any river obstacle, such as rocks and partially submerged logs, which allows water, but not solid objects, to pass through. This buildup of debris usually occurs on river bends and confluences or forks in the river. Strainers are dangerous due to underwater currents or undertows which may cause entrapment.

Sweepers: Trees hanging over the bank and into the water. These are a serious hazard and can knock people or their gear off the craft or capsize the craft.

For further information...

This brochure contains introductory information to enable you to choose the river adventure most suitable for your skills and interests. You are encouraged to contact the BLM for detailed information on the river of your choice.

For information about all BLM recreation attractions in Alaska, start at our state home page: www.blm.gov/ak

For information on the Delta and Gulkana rivers:

BLM Glennallen Field Office
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, Alaska 99588
(907) 822-3217
www.blm.gov/ak/gdo

For information on the Unalakleet River:

BLM Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, AK 99507
(907) 267-1246
www.blm.gov/ak/ado

For information on the Fortymile River, Squirrel River, Birch Creek and Beaver Creek:

Fairbanks District Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844
(907) 474-2251

For Leave No Trace information and materials: www.lnt.org or www.river-management.org

Before you start

Have a float plan

Your careful planning will help ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable trip. Talk to people who have floated the river. BLM web sites contain detailed river planning information and photos; internet addresses are listed elsewhere in the publication.

(left) No matter how nice it is when you start your trip, remember it can snow any month of the year in Alaska.

Recreation specialists in BLM district offices can provide current information about river conditions. Their addresses are listed elsewhere in this brochure.

Schedule your trip so that you encounter water levels appropriate to your group's ability. Allow extra time for bad weather and sightseeing along the way. Plan alternate exit routes and locations where help will be available should you have to end your trip early. Take extra food.

Prepare a float plan and leave it with friends or relatives so they can contact authorities if you are overdue. Be sure to inform these people of your safe return to avoid an unnecessary search.

Purchase adequate maps

It is essential that you carry a good map of the area you are traveling through and know how to use it. A U.S. Geological Survey one-inch-to-the-mile (1:63,360) scale map is suggested. These can be obtained from the USGS map sales offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks and at many sporting goods stores and other locations throughout Alaska.

Special Recreation Permits

Travel on Alaska's rivers has increased significantly in recent years. To protect the quality of your recreational experience, BLM requires commercial operators and the sponsors of competitive events to acquire a Special Recreation Permit and to adhere to certain stipulations.

This permit program allows BLM to monitor river use and manage the rivers in the public interest. Contact any BLM office for additional information.

Check your equipment

Carefully check your equipment to be sure it is in good condition before leaving. Pack your equipment in watertight bags that can be securely fastened to your craft. The following items are suggested for your river trip:

- ◆ Type III or V life jackets for each person
- ◆ throwbags or throw cushions (Type IV)
- ◆ first aid kit
- ◆ boat repair kit
- ◆ shovel
- ◆ spare oars or paddles
- ◆ warm clothing packed in a "dry bag"
- ◆ rain gear
- ◆ insect repellent or headnet
- ◆ air pump (for inflatable rafts)
- ◆ bailing device
- ◆ matches in watertight container

Visiting Canada

Before traveling into Canada, learn about Canadian customs regulations. For example, Canada does not permit handguns of any kind. The U.S. Customs pamphlet *Know Before You Go* provides information for reentering the U.S.



Whether you travel by canoe, kayak or raft, Alaska's lakes and rivers will satisfy your sense of adventure.



(above) Be sure to register at the put-in point.



(left) Commercial guides must secure a Special Recreation Permit from BLM in advance of their trip.

General precautions

Become familiar with the difficult parts of the trip. Remember that river difficulty ratings may change during different water levels.

Never travel alone. A minimum of two, and preferably three, craft are recommended for Alaska river trips. Remember that accidents can occur in seconds and emergency assistance may take many hours to reach you.

Have an honest knowledge of your boating ability. Be in good physical condition.

At least one person in your group should be trained in basic first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). One person should be trained in swiftwater rescue techniques.

Travel suitably equipped with proper clothing and footwear. All equipment must be in good repair.

Pack your craft carefully; keep weight low in the craft. Overloading is very dangerous.

Never get broadside to the current in fast water. Scout rapids before proceeding.

Be alert for approaching hazards such as boulders, jagged rocks, large holes and fallen trees. Avoid trees hanging over the water by going around, not under.

Drink only boiled, filtered or chemically-treated water. Untreated water can make you sick.

Avoid bears

Keep your campsite clean. Cook and keep food away from tents. Store food in airtight containers so bears can't smell it. These and other helpful hints are contained in a special inter-agency brochure *Bear Facts*, widely available at information centers throughout Alaska.

Respect private property and wildlife

Most Alaska rivers have private lands or cabins along their banks. Please respect this private property. Structures and equipment should be left as you find them. Some look abandoned but in fact may still be in seasonal use. When not specifically marked as private, it is still best to avoid camping near improvements as structures may be on private property.

Historic objects are protected by federal law. Removal or destruction denies the next visitor an opportunity to share in the rich and colorful history of Alaska.

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons frequently nest near waterways. Please observe them safely from a distance. Eagles are protected by federal law.

Cold water

Alaskan waters are extremely cold all year. Even the best swimmers should wear a life vest at all times because the cold water robs not only your strength but your will and ability to save yourself. Dress to protect yourself from cold water and weather extremes.

(left) Type III or V life jackets (personal flotation devices) are essential for each trip participant.



Practice "Leave No Trace" ethics

Alaska's natural beauty attracts visitors from all over the world. People who visit Alaska's pristine backcountry have high expectations and your outdoor manners are very important.

Pick up any litter you find and carry out all garbage. If you pack it in, pack it out.

Use a camp stove or bring firewood or charcoal if you want an open fire. Use a firepan.

Do not bury any leftover food as this will attract animals to the campsite. Pack out everything, including all burned trash.

If you choose to build a fire, gather dead and downed wood only and use existing campsites and firepits. Keep your fire away from vegetation.

Extinguish fires completely. Observe any fire restrictions. Fireworks are not permitted in Wild and Scenic river corridors.

Stay on existing trails. Camp on durable surfaces such as rocks, gravel or sand.

Dispose of gray water away from rivers and lakes. You don't have to use soap in the wilderness, but if you do, be sure it is biodegradable.

Bury human waste 6" deep, 200' away from waterways, trails and campsites. Better yet, use a portable toilet system and pack out human waste.

Leave plants, minerals, wildlife and other natural features undisturbed for others to enjoy. Those who follow you will appreciate it if you leave no sign of your presence.

(cover) Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River.

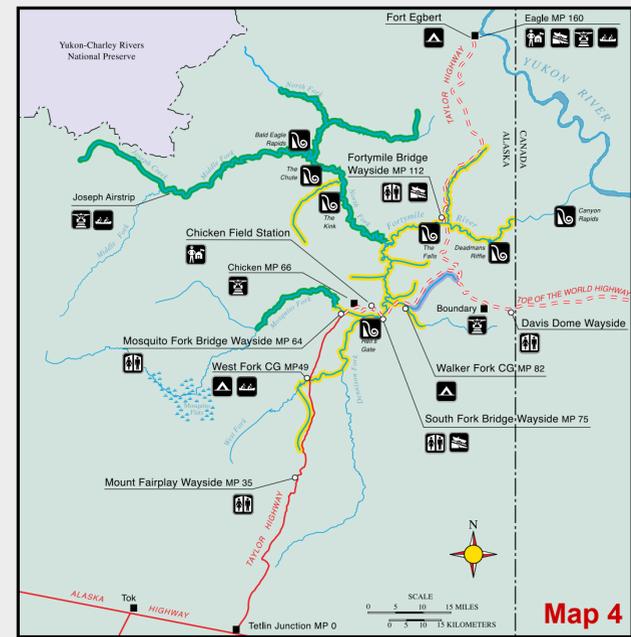
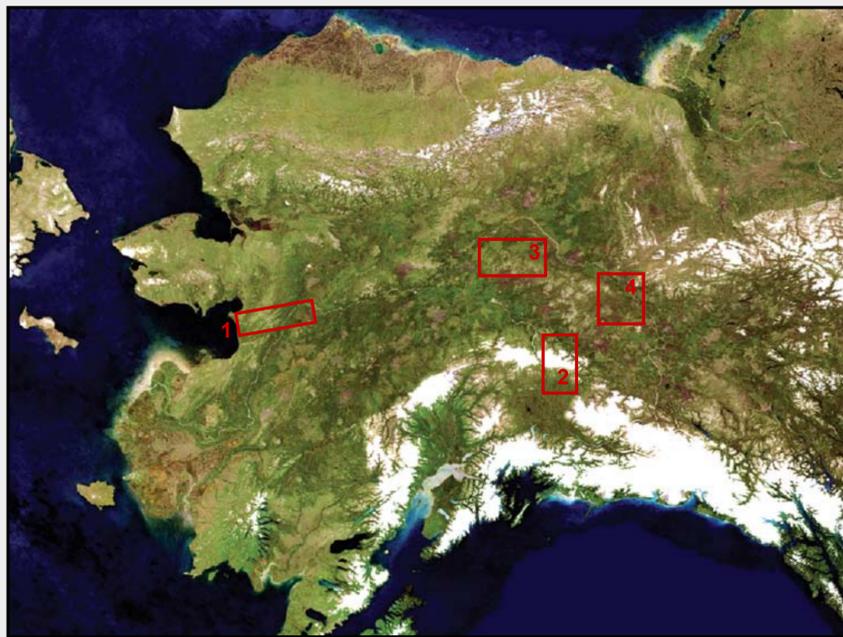
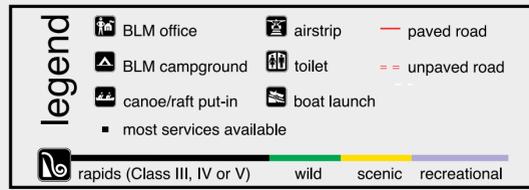
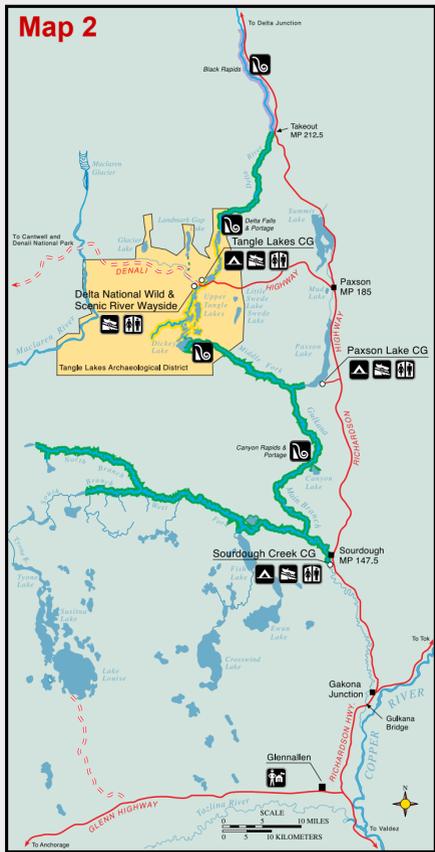
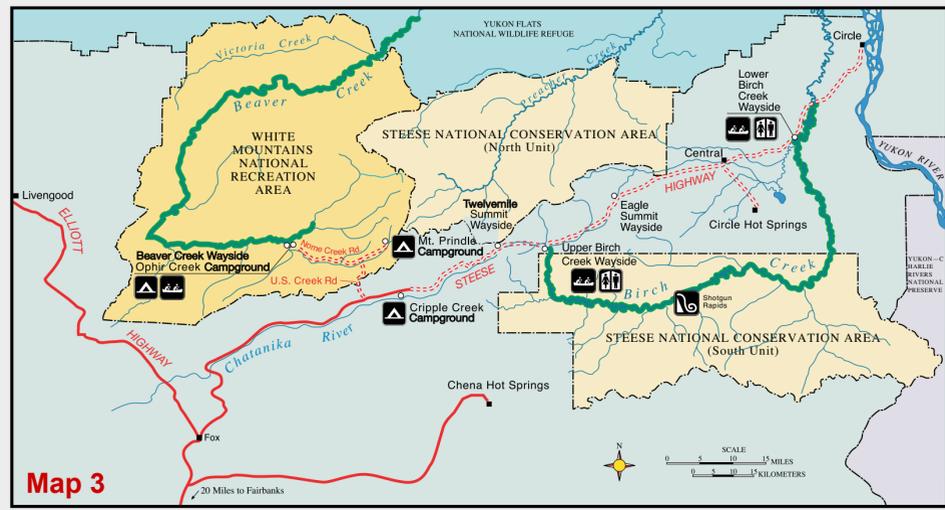


Consulting an equipment checklist at home will lower the chance you are missing an essential item at the put-in.

Alaska RIVER ADVENTURES



Alaska River Adventures



Beaver Creek



Beaver Creek is a moderately swift, shallow stream that flows through boreal forests and rolling hills as it passes the jagged limestone cliffs of the White Mountains in Interior Alaska. The river is a Class I float with a few short sections of Class II water. Put-in via Nome Creek Road in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

Many gravel bars along the way offer opportunities for camping or fishing. You may also see moose, Dall sheep, caribou, wolf, bears, eagles, falcons and migratory waterfowl. Fish for arctic grayling, northern pike, burbot and whitefish. Take-out for this 110-mile trip is via airplane on the gravel bars near Victoria Creek.

Downstream from here, Beaver Creek slows and meanders through the marshes of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge on its way north to the Yukon River, a distance of 168 additional miles. You must travel another 84 miles to the Yukon River bridge at the Dalton Highway before you can take out at a road. This extended wilderness trip option totals 362 river miles.

Birch Creek



From its headwaters just north of the Steese National Conservation Area South Unit, Birch Creek flows quite swiftly through upland plateaus, forested valleys, rolling hills, and low mountains. As it leaves the mountains, it slows and meanders until it joins the Yukon River.

Just after Clums Fork you will encounter a rock garden; then you will enter a series of three unnamed Class II and III rapids, culminating in the Shotgun Rapids.

River travelers often see moose, black or grizzly bear, lynx, fox, caribou and a variety of birds while they quietly float downstream. Sandhill cranes, Canada geese, common mergansers and other waterfowl visit on their way to and from summer breeding grounds. Arctic grayling can be found in the clear tributaries of Birch Creek.

The 126-mile "wild" river segment administered by BLM can be reached from the Steese Highway northeast of Fairbanks. Parking is available at waysides at MP 94 and 140.4.

Delta River



The Delta River begins high in the Tangle Lakes system of southcentral Alaska and then flows north through the Alaska Range to the Tanana River.

The most popular trip is a 29-mile segment beginning at Tangle Lakes and ending at the Richardson Highway MP212.5. Tundra-covered hills give way to steep alluvial slopes and rock cliffs as you journey northward. Water quality is excellent in the upper sections but it changes to a silty, turbid condition as glacial streams of the Alaska Range flow in. Most fishing is for grayling.

If you are an experienced kayaker or white water rafter, you can continue an extra 18 miles downstream past Black Rapids Glacier. The river becomes very swift with high standing waves and glacial silt. It is not recommended for open canoes and is rated Class III-IV. There are no designated take-out points for this optional extended trip, but the Richardson Highway parallels the river in numerous locations.

Fortymile River



The Fortymile River drainage is an extensive network of creeks and rivers in east-central Alaska, 392 miles of which have been given national wild, scenic or recreational river designations. Boaters have many choices for recreational trips through deep, winding canyons filled with forests of birch, spruce and aspen.

One popular trip is the 38-mile float from the South Fork bridge to the Fortymile bridge. You can also continue from the Fortymile bridge to the Yukon River and the town of Eagle, a distance of 92 miles. There are sections of Class II, III and IV rapids on this trip, depending on the water level, so plan your trip carefully.

The Fortymile country is gold country and the site a major gold rush dating to more than 120 years ago. Watch for remains of old dredges, trappers' cabins and old townsites such as Franklin, Steele Creek and Fortymile. Mining continues today and you will probably encounter small suction dredge operations in some locations. These operations are regulated by BLM under permit and are private property.

Gulkana River



Scenery along the Gulkana River is subdued but wild. The river gently meanders through spruce-hardwood forests most of the way. The Gulkana offers excellent opportunities to see moose, waterfowl, bald eagles and bears. Salmon runs peak mid-June to late July; floaters should expect to see many weekend fishermen on the lower sections of the river during this time.

A 3-to-4-day trip beginning at Paxson Lake down the Main Branch is the most popular trip due to its easy access at both ends. A longer trip down the Middle Fork offers more solitude.

The highlight of either trip is the 14-mile long Canyon Rapids which must be portaged by the less experienced. Below Canyon Rapids, there are 9 miles of Class II rapids which are generally shallow and rocky; many canoes and rafts have been severely damaged here.

The West Fork is a superb opportunity for extended wilderness travel of 7 to 14 days through outstanding wildlife habitat.

Unalakleet River



The cold, crystal-clear waters of the Unalakleet River meander through an expansive valley and parallel part of the historic Iditarod Trail. Waters drop gradually throughout the river's entire length; there are no waterfalls or rapids. Many gravel bars, cut banks, oxbows and marshes contribute to the scenic variety. Riverside vegetation is usually dense and may obscure views of the surrounding hills.

Fishing is excellent for chinook, coho, chum and pink salmon. Arctic grayling and Dolly Varden are also plentiful.

The area's remote location in western Alaska means that visitors are unlikely to meet other recreationists while on their journey. However, travelers will likely encounter fishermen and local travelers in power boats along the lower reaches of the river.

River Comparisons

River	Experience Opportunities	Access	Difficulty*	Avg. Gradient	Trip Length	Fish	USGS Maps	Notes
Beaver Creek	Beaver Creek provides back country floating through some of Alaska's remotest country. Enjoy an opportunity for self reliance, grayling fishing, solitude, and wildlife viewing.	Put-in at Ophir Creek on Nome Creek Road. Take-out by airplane on gravel bars near Victoria Creek. Trip may continue onto Yukon River for vehicle pickup at Yukon River Bridge on the Dalton Highway.	Class I, Some short Class II sections	9 ft/mile to Victoria Creek	Nome Creek to Victoria Creek: 7 to 10 days, 110 miles. Add 8 to 14 days, 252 mi. to Yukon River Bridge	arctic grayling, burbot, northern pike, whitefish	Circle D-5, D-6, C-6, B-6; Livengood B-1, B-2, C-2, D-1	Beware of sweepers and occasional shallow gravel bars. Arrange air taxi in advance.
Birch Creek	Opportunities for solitude and wildlife viewing abound. You may not see anyone on your trip.	Accessible at both ends by Steese Highway, MP 94 and 140.4	Class I and II; several Class III rapids	10 ft/mile	7 to 10 days, 126 miles. Alternate one-day trip for 16 river miles: Mile 140.4 to the Steese Highway	arctic grayling, northern pike, whitefish	Circle A-3, A-4, B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, C-1	Upper 10 miles often require lining.
Delta River	Small groups traveling in canoes or kayaks can enjoy Alaska Range scenery and remote tundra. Opportunities for solitude, grayling and lake trout fishing, and wildlife viewing.	Put-in at Tangle Lakes, Denali Highway, MP 22. Take-out at Richardson Highway, MP 212.5. Kayaks and rafts can continue to MP 229.	Class I and II; Class II, III and IV past MP 212.5	16 ft/mile	2 days, 29 miles; Optional raft or kayak trip 1 additional day, 18 mi.	arctic grayling, burbot, lake trout, whitefish	Mt. Hayes A-4, B-4, C-4	One-half-mile portage required at Delta River water falls.
Upper Tangle Lakes		Put-in and take-out at the Delta National Wild and Scenic River Wayside, Denali Highway MP22.	Class I	6 ft/mile	Upper Tangles canoe loop: 1-2 days	arctic grayling, lake trout, burbot, whitefish	Mt. Hayes A-5, Gulkana D-5	Portages are not marked and the Tangle River may require lining due to low water levels.
Fortymile River								
Middle and North Forks	Provides potentially larger parties opportunities to enjoy a range of experiences such as wildlife viewing and grayling fishing. You may encounter gold miners working the gravels of the Forty Mile and you will see relics of earlier historic mining operations.	Put-in via plane at Joseph. Take-out at Fortymile River Bridge, Clinton Creek Bridge or continue on down the Yukon River to Eagle.	Overall Class I; Class II, III, IV and V rapids	10 ft/mile (5 ft/mile from Joseph to Eagle)	Joseph to Fortymile River Bridge: 4 to 5 days, 92 miles. Joseph to Eagle 7 to 9 days, 182 miles.	arctic grayling, burbot	Eagle B-3, B-4, B-5, B-6, C-3. Canadian maps: Fortymile 116-C-7, Cassiar Cis. 116-C8, Shell Creek 116-C-9, Mt. Gladman 116C-10	Class V rapids (The Kink) should be portaged. Canoes should be lined through Class II rapids (The Chute and Deadman Riffle).
South Fork		Put-in at Taylor Highway, MP 49 or 75. Take-out as described for Middle Fork.	Overall Class I; some Class II and III rapids	5 ft/mile from MP 49 to Dennison Fork	MP 49 to Fortymile River Bridge: 3 to 4 days, 72 mi. O'Brien Creek to Eagle: 4 to 5 days, 92 mi.	arctic grayling, burbot		
Gulkana River								
Main Branch	A variety of users enjoy the Gulkana River. Camp in recommended sites. Opportunities for wildlife viewing, salmon and grayling fishing, relaxed paddling and exciting whitewater.	Put-in at Paxson Lake Campground (Richardson Highway, MP 175). Take-out at Sourdough Creek Campground (Richardson Highway, MP 147.5).	Class I and II; one Class III rapid	16 ft/mile; 50 ft/mile below Canyon Rapids	Paxson Lake to Sourdough: 3 to 4 days, 45 miles	arctic grayling, red and king salmon, rainbow trout, steelhead, whitefish	Gulkana B-3, B-4, C-4, D-4	High level of use on June/July weekends may detract from wilderness experience.
Middle Fork		Put-in at Delta NWSR Wayside, Denali Highway MP 22. Take-out at Sourdough Creek Campground (Richardson Highway, MP 147.5).	Overall Class I, some Class II and one Class III	varies from 6 ft/mile to 75 ft/mile	Denali Highway to Sourdough: 6 to 7 days, 76 mi.	same as Main Branch	Gulkana B-3, B-4, C-4, D-4	Lining for about 1 mile through shallow, Class II rapids and one small Class III rapid.
West Fork		The North Branch is only accessible by float plane to its headwater lakes. The South Branch of the West Fork can be reached by portage from the Tyone River or by flying to one of its headwater lakes. Take-out at Sourdough Creek Campground (Richardson Highway, MP 147.5).	Overall Class I, some Class II both branches	North Branch: varies from 3 to 60 ft/mi. South Branch: about 2 ft/mi	North Branch: 5-10 days, 80 mi. South Branch: 7-14 days, 86 mi.	same as Main Branch, both branches	North Branch: Gulkana C-4, C-5, C-6. South Branch: Gulkana B-6, C-4, C-5, C-6.	North Branch: Log jams and sweepers may inhibit travel. South Branch: A series of portages, low water levels, and narrow channels require extra time and patience.
Unalakleet	Opportunities for renowned grayling and salmon fishing, wildlife viewing and enjoying the river's scenery. Expect to see power boats.	Access via jet boat from Unalakleet. Ten Mile Creek is often the limit for upstream travel by motorized craft due to low water levels and log jams.	Class I	7 ft/mile	Tenmile Creek to Unalakleet: 6 days, 76 miles	arctic grayling; king, silver, pink, and chum salmon; Dolly Varden	Norton Sound A-1, A-2 and Unalakleet D-2, D-3, D-4	Log jams and sweepers may inhibit travel. Lower 24 miles cross Native village land.

*Remember that river difficulty ratings may change as water levels fluctuate (ratings defined on other side).